Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Please amend claim 25, and add new claims 62-81 as follows:

Listing of Claims:

1-16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously Presented) A method of fabricating a fiber-cement soffit, comprising:

providing a fiber-cement panel having a length, a width and a thickness, wherein the thickness is approximately 0.25-0.625 inch;

placing the fiber-cement panel between a punch assembly and a support assembly, the punch assembly having a punch plate and a plurality of punches coupled to the punch plate, and the support assembly having a support plate with a plurality of holes; and

driving the punches at least substantially simultaneously into and through at least a portion of the thickness of the fiber-cement panel to form a plurality of apertures in the fiber-cement panel by ejecting plugs from the fiber-cement panel through the holes in the support plate.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17 wherein driving the punches comprises penetrating the punches into the fiber-cement panel along the full length of the fiber-cement panel in one stroke of the punches.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17 wherein the fiber-cement panel has a thickness of approximately 0.25-0.31625 inch, and wherein driving the punches comprises penetrating the punches into the panel to a depth of approximately 0.0625-0.01875 inch without passing the punches completely through the panel.

20. (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein:

the punch assembly includes a flat punch plate and the plurality of punches project from the punch plate, the punches being spaced apart from one another by approximately 0.5-1.0 inch, and the punches having a first end attached to the punch plate, a second end opposite the first end with a concave contact face, and a first diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch;

the support assembly includes a flat support plate and the plurality of holes extend through the support plate, each hole being aligned with a corresponding punch projecting from the punch plate, and the holes having a second diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch/hole clearance between the punches and holes of approximately 0.04-0.07 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches toward the holes and into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject the plugs from the panel.

21. (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein:

the punch assembly includes a flat punch plate and the plurality of punches project from the punch plate, the punches being spaced apart from one another by approximately 0.5-1.0 inch, and the punches having a first end attached to the punch plate, a second end opposite the first end with a concave contact face, and a first diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch;

the support assembly includes a flat support plate and the plurality of holes extend through the support plate, each hole being aligned with a corresponding punch projecting from the punch plate, and the holes having a second diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch/hole clearance between the punches and holes of approximately 4%-30% of the second diameter of the holes; and;

driving the punches comprises moving the punches toward the holes and into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject the plugs from the panel.

22. (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein:

the punch assembly includes a flat punch plate and the plurality of punches project from the punch plate, the punches being spaced apart from one another by approximately 0.5-1.0 inch, and the punches having a first end attached to the punch plate, a second end opposite the first end with a concave contact face, and a first diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch;

the support assembly includes a flat support plate and the plurality of holes extend through the support plate, each hole being aligned with a corresponding punch projecting from the punch plate, and the holes having a second diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch/hole clearance between the punches and holes of approximately 4%-40% of a thickness of the fiber-cement panel; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches toward the holes and into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject the plugs from the panel.

23. (Previously Presented) A method of fabricating a fiber-cement soffit, comprising:

providing a fiber-cement panel having a thickness of approximately 0.25 to 0.625 inch, the fiber-cement panel comprising cement, cellulose material, and a binder;

placing the fiber-cement panel between a punch assembly and a support assembly, the punch assembly having a punch plate and a plurality of punches coupled to the punch plate, and the support assembly having a support plate with a plurality of holes;

driving the punches at least substantially simultaneously through at least a portion of the thickness of the fiber-cement panel to form apertures in the fiber-cement panel by ejecting plugs from the fiber-cement panel through the holes in the support plate; and

withdrawing the punches from the fiber-cement panel without delaminating the fiber-cement panel at the apertures.

24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 wherein the fiber-cement panel has a length, a width and a thickness, and wherein driving the punches comprises

penetrating the punches into the fiber-cement panel at least substantially simultaneously along the length of the fiber-cement panel.

25. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 23 wherein the fiber-cement panel has a thickness of approximately 0.25-0.31625 inch, and wherein driving the punches comprises penetrating the punches into the panel to a depth of approximately ~~0.25-0.31625~~ 0.0625-0.1875 inch without passing the punches completely through the panel.

26. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein:

the punch assembly includes a flat punch plate and the plurality of punches project from the punch plate, the punches being spaced apart from one another by approximately 0.5-1.0 inch, and the punches having a first end attached to the punch plate, a second end opposite the first end with a concave contact face, and a first diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch;

the support assembly includes a flat support plate and the plurality of holes extend through the support plate, each hole being aligned with a corresponding punch projecting from the punch plate, and the holes having a second diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch/hole clearance between the punches and holes of approximately 0.04-0.07 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches toward the holes and into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject the plugs from the panel.

27. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein:

the punch assembly includes a flat punch plate and the plurality of punches project from the punch plate, the punches being spaced apart from one another by approximately 0.5-1.0 inch, and the punches having a first end attached to the punch plate, a second end opposite the first end with a concave contact face, and a first diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch;

the support assembly includes a flat support plate and the plurality of holes extend through the support plate, each hole being aligned with a corresponding punch projecting from

the punch plate, and the holes having a second diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch/hole clearance between the punches and holes of approximately 4%-30% of the second diameter of the holes; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches toward the holes and in to the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject the plugs from the panel.

28. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein:

the punch assembly includes a flat punch plate and the plurality of punches project from the punch plate, the punches being spaced apart from one another by approximately 0.5-1.0 inch, and the punches having a first end attached to the punch plate, a second end opposite the first end with a concave contact face, and a first diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch;

the support assembly includes a flat support plate and the plurality of holes extend through the support plate, each hole being aligned with a corresponding punch projecting from the punch plate, and the holes having a second diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch/hole clearance between the punches and holes of approximately 4%-40% of a thickness of the fiber-cement panel; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches toward the holes and into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject the plugs from the panel.

29. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein withdrawing the punches from the fiber-cement panel comprises pressing resilient biasing members against the fiber-cement panel adjacent to at least a subset of the plurality of punches when the punches penetrate into fiber-cement panel.

30. (Original) The method of claim 23, further comprising:

providing a plurality of biasing elements coupled to the punch assembly, the biasing elements being compressible, resilient members projecting from the punch plate adjacent to a punch; and

withdrawing the punches from the fiber-cement panel by pressing the biasing elements against the fiber-cement panel proximate to at least a subset of the punches as the punches penetrate the fiber-cement panel.

31. (Previously Presented) A method of fabricating a fiber-cement soffit, comprising:

placing a fiber-cement panel between a punch assembly and a support assembly, the punch assembly having a punch plate and a plurality of punches projecting from the punch plate, and the support assembly having a support plate with a plurality of holes; and

forming a plurality of apertures in the fiber-cement panel at least substantially simultaneously by driving the punches at least substantially simultaneously through only a portion of the fiber-cement panel without passing the punches completely through the panel.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 31 wherein the fiber-cement panel has a thickness of approximately 0.25-0.31625 inch, and wherein driving the punches comprises penetrating the punches into the panel to a depth of approximately 0.0625-0.1875 inch without passing the punches completely through the panel.

33. (Original) The method of claim 31 wherein:

the punch assembly includes a flat punch plate and the plurality of punches project from the punch plate, the punches being spaced apart from one another by approximately 0.5-1.0 inch, and the punches having a first end attached to the punch plate, a second end opposite the first end with a concave contact face, and a first diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch;

the support assembly includes a flat support plate and the plurality of holes extend through the support plate, each hole being aligned with a corresponding punch projecting from the punch plate, and the holes having a second diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch/hole clearance between the punches and holes of approximately 0.04-0.07 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches toward the holes and into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject the plugs from the panel.

34. (Original) The method of claim 31 wherein:

the punch assembly includes a flat punch plate and the plurality of punches project from the punch plate, the punches being spaced apart from one another by approximately 0.5-1.0 inch, and the punches having a first end attached to the punch plate, a second end opposite the first end with a concave contact face, and a first diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch;

the support assembly includes a flat support plate and the plurality of holes extend through the support plate, each hole being aligned with a corresponding punch projecting from the punch plate, and the holes having a second diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch/hole clearance between the punches and holes of approximately 4%-30% of the second diameter of the holes; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches toward the holes and into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject the plugs from the panel.

35. (Original) The method of claim 31 wherein:

the punch assembly includes a flat punch plate and the plurality of punches project from the punch plate, the punches being spaced apart from one another by approximately 0.5-1.0 inch, and the punches having a first end attached to the punch plate, a second end opposite the first end with a concave contact face, and a first diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch;

the support assembly includes a flat support plate and the plurality of holes extend through the support plate, each hole being aligned with a corresponding punch projecting from the punch plate, and the holes having a second diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch/hole clearance between the punches and holes of approximately 4%-40% of a thickness of the fiber-cement panel; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches toward the holes and into the

fiber-cement panel until the punches eject the plugs from the panel.

36. (Original) The method of claim 31 wherein withdrawing the punches from the fiber-cement panel comprises pressing resilient biasing members against the fiber-cement panel adjacent to at least a subset of the plurality of punches when the punches penetrate into fiber-cement panel.

37. (Original) The method of claim 31, further comprising:

providing a plurality of biasing elements coupled to the punch assembly, the biasing elements being compressible, resilient members projecting from the punch plate adjacent to a punch; and

withdrawing the punches from the fiber-cement panel by pressing the biasing elements against the fiber-cement panel proximate to at least a subset of the punches as the punches penetrate the fiber-cement panel.

38. (Previously Presented) A method of fabricating a fiber-cement soffit, comprising:

providing a fiber-cement panel having a thickness of approximately 0.25-0.625 inch;

placing a fiber-cement panel between a punch assembly and a support assembly so that a first side of the panel faces the punch assembly and a second side of the panel faces the support assembly, the punch assembly having a punch plate and a plurality of punches coupled to the punch plate, and the support assembly having a support plate with a plurality of holes; and

driving the punches through at least a portion of the thickness of the fiber-cement panel at least substantially simultaneously to form a plurality of tapered openings in the fiber-cement panel.

39. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 38 wherein driving the punches comprises passing the punches along a punch stroke path to an intermediate depth of the fiber-cement panel without passing the punches completely through the panel and ejecting plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 38 wherein driving the punches comprises passing the punches along a stroke path completely through the fiber-cement panel and ejecting the plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

41. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 38 wherein:

the punches are arranged in an array and have a diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch, and the holes are arranged in a corresponding array and have a diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch- hole clearance between the punches and the holes of approximately 0.04-0.07 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches along a punch stroke into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

42. (Previously Presented) A method of fabricating fiber-cement soffit, comprising:

placing a fiber-cement panel between a punch assembly and a support assembly so that a first side of the panel faces the punch assembly and a second side of the panel faces the support assembly, the punch assembly having a punch plate and a plurality of punches having a first cross-sectional dimension coupled to the punch plate, and the support assembly having a support plate with a plurality of holes having a second cross-sectional dimension larger than the first cross-sectional dimension of the punches; and

driving the punches through at least a portion of the fiber-cement panel at least substantially simultaneously to form a plurality of openings in the fiber-cement panel that have

the first dimension of the punches at the first side of the panel and the second dimension of the holes at the second side of the panel.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42 wherein driving the punches comprises passing the punches along a punch stroke path to an intermediate depth of the fiber-cement panel without passing the punches completely through the panel and ejecting plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42 wherein driving the punches comprises passing the punches along a stroke path completely through the fiber-cement panel and ejecting the plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42 wherein:

the punches are arranged in an array and have a diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch, and the holes are arranged in a corresponding array and have a diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch-hole clearance between the punches and the holes of approximately 0.04-0.07 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches along a punch stroke into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

46. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42 wherein:

a clearance between the holes in the support plate and the punches is approximately between 4%-30% of the second dimension of the holes; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches along a punch stroke into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

47. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42 wherein:

a clearance between the holes in the support plate and the punches is approximately between 4%-40% of a thickness of the fiber-cement panel; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches along a punch stroke into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

48. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42 wherein:

a clearance between the holes in the support plate and the punches is approximately between 0.04-0.07 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches along a punch stroke into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

49. (Previously Presented) A method of fabricating fiber-cement soffit, comprising:

providing a fiber-cement panel having a length, a width, and a thickness, wherein the thickness is approximately 0.25-0.625 inch;

placing the fiber-cement panel between a punch assembly and a support assembly so that a first side of the panel faces the punch assembly and a second side of the panel faces the support assembly, the punch assembly having a punch plate and a plurality of punches having a first cross-sectional dimension coupled to the punch plate, and the support assembly having a support plate with a plurality of holes having a second cross-sectional dimension larger than the first cross-sectional dimension of the punches;

driving the punches along a punch stroke through at least a portion of the thickness of the fiber-cement panel at least substantially simultaneously to form a plurality of openings in the fiber-cement panel that have the first dimension of the punches at the first side of the panel and the second dimension of the holes at the second side of the panel; and

pressing a compressible biasing element against the first side of the fiber-cement panel as the punches move along the punch stroke.

50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49 wherein driving the punches comprises punching holes into the fiber-cement panel along a full length of the panel in one punch stroke.

51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49 wherein driving the punches comprises passing the punches completely through the panel.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49 wherein:

the punches are arranged in an array and have a diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch, and the holes are arranged in a corresponding array and have a diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch-hole clearance between the punches and the holes of approximately 0.040.07 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches into the fiber-cement panel to form openings having a dimension at the first side of the panel of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch.

53. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49 wherein:

a clearance between the holes in the support plate and the punches is approximately between 4%-30% of the second dimension of the holes; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches into the fiber-cement panel to form openings having a first dimension at the first side of the panel and a second dimension larger than the first dimension at the second side of the panel.

54. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49 wherein:

a clearance between the holes in the support plate and the punches is approximately between 4%-40% of a thickness of the fiber-cement panel; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches into the fiber-cement panel to form openings having a first dimension at the first side of the panel and a second dimension larger than the first dimension at the second side of the panel.

55. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49 wherein:

a clearance between the holes in the support plate and the punches is approximately between 0.04-0.07 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches into the fiber-cement panel to form openings having a first dimension at the first side of the panel and a second dimension larger than the first dimension at the second side of the panel.

56. (Previously Presented) A method of fabricating a fiber-cement soffit, comprising:

providing a fiber-cement panel comprising cement and cellulosic material, the fiber-cement panel having a length, a width and a thickness, wherein the thickness is approximately 0.25-0.625 inch;

placing the fiber-cement panel between a punch assembly and a support assembly, the punch assembly having a punch plate and a plurality of punches coupled to the punch plate, and the support assembly having a support plate with a plurality of holes; and

driving the punches at least substantially simultaneously into and through at least a portion of the thickness of the fiber-cement panel to form a plurality of apertures in the fiber-cement panel by ejecting plugs from the fiber-cement panel through the holes in the support plate.

57. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 56 wherein driving the punches comprises penetrating the punches into the fiber-cement panel along the full length of the fiber-cement panel in one stroke of the punches.

58. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 56 wherein the fiber-cement panel has a thickness of approximately 0.25-0.31625 inch, and wherein driving the punches comprises penetrating the punches into the panel to a depth of approximately 0.0625-0.01875 inch without passing the punches completely through the panel.

59. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 56 wherein:

the punch assembly includes a flat punch plate and the plurality of punches project from the punch plate, the punches being spaced apart from one another by approximately 0.5-1.0 inch, and the punches having a first end attached to the punch plate, a second end opposite the first end with a concave contact face, and a first diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch;

the support assembly includes a flat support plate and the plurality of holes extend through the support plate, each hole being aligned with a corresponding punch projecting from the punch plate, and the holes having a second diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch/hole clearance between the punches and holes of approximately 0.04-0.07 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches toward the holes and into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject the plugs from the panel.

60. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 56 wherein:

the punch assembly includes a flat punch plate and the plurality of punches project from the punch plate, the punches being spaced apart from one another by approximately 0.5-1.0 inch, and the punches having a first end attached to the punch plate, a second end opposite the first end with a concave contact face, and a first diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch;

the support assembly includes a flat support plate and the plurality of holes extend through the support plate, each hole being aligned with a corresponding punch projecting from the punch plate, and the holes having a second diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to

provide a radial punch/hole clearance between the punches and holes of approximately 4%-30% of the second diameter of the holes; and;

driving the punches comprises moving the punches toward the holes and into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject the plugs from the panel.

61. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 56 wherein:

the punch assembly includes a flat punch plate and the plurality of punches project from the punch plate, the punches being spaced apart from one another by approximately 0.5-1.0 inch, and the punches having a first end attached to the punch plate, a second end opposite the first end with a concave contact face, and a first diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch;

the support assembly includes a flat support plate and the plurality of holes extend through the support plate, each hole being aligned with a corresponding punch projecting from the punch plate, and the holes having a second diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch/hole clearance between the punches and holes of approximately 4%-40% of a thickness of the fiber-cement panel; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches toward the holes and into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject the plugs from the panel.

62. (New) A method of fabricating fiber-cement soffit, comprising:

placing a fiber-cement panel between a punch assembly and a support assembly so that a first side of the panel faces the punch assembly and a second side of the panel faces the support assembly, the punch assembly having a punch plate and a plurality of punches coupled to the punch plate, and the support assembly having a support plate with a plurality of holes therein corresponding to the arrangement of the punches;

driving the punches along a punch stroke through at least a portion of the fiber-cement panel to form a plurality of openings therein; and

pressing a plurality of resilient biasing elements against the first side of the fiber-cement panel as the punches move along the punch stroke, each of the resilient biasing elements

having an end and at least one lateral peripheral surface that is unconstrained to allow for outward lateral displacement thereof when the end is pressed against the first side.

63. (New) The method of claim 62:

wherein each of the resilient biasing elements comprises a generally tubular body attached to one of the punches; and

further comprising after driving the punches along a punch stroke, retracting the punch assembly with each of the resilient biasing elements being retained on one of the punches.

64. (New) The method of claim 62 wherein each of the resilient biasing elements has a length that is at least coextensive with a length of a corresponding one of the punches.

65. (New) The method of claim 62 wherein each of the resilient biasing elements comprises a spring.

66. (New) The method of claim 62 wherein each of the resilient biasing elements comprises a resilient tube that receives one of the punches.

67. (New) The method of claim 62 wherein each of the resilient biasing element comprises a polymeric resilient member.

68. (New) The method of claim 67 wherein the polymeric resilient member comprises rubber.

69. (New) The method of claim 62 wherein driving the punches comprises passing the punches along the punch stroke path to an intermediate depth of the fiber-cement panel without passing the punches completely through the panel and ejecting plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

70. (New) The method of claim 62 wherein driving the punches comprises passing the punches along the stroke path completely through the fiber-cement panel and ejecting the plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

71. (New) A method of fabricating fiber-cement soffit, comprising:

placing a fiber-cement panel between a punch assembly positioned in a retracted position and a support assembly so that a first side of the panel faces the punch assembly and a second side of the panel faces the support assembly, the punch assembly having a punch plate and a plurality of punches coupled thereto, a resilient biasing element attached to at least one of the punches, and the support assembly having a support plate with a plurality of holes therein corresponding to the arrangement of the punches;

driving the punches along a punch stroke against the first side of the fiber-cement panel through at least a portion of the fiber-cement panel to form a plurality of openings therein; and

compressing the resilient biasing element as the punches are driven along the punch stroke.

72. (New) The method of claim 71 wherein:

the resilient biasing element includes an end and at least one lateral peripheral surface; and

compressing the resilient biasing element as the punches are driven along the punch stroke comprises allowing the at least one lateral peripheral surface to be outwardly laterally displaced when the end is pressed against the first side.

73. (New) The method of claim 71:

wherein the resilient biasing element comprises a plurality of resilient biasing elements each of which is attached to one of the punches; and

further comprising retracting the punch assembly with each of the resilient biasing elements being retained on one of the punches.

74. (New) The method of claim 71 wherein the resilient biasing element comprises a plurality of resilient biasing elements each of which is attached to one of the punches.

75. (New) The method of claim 71 wherein the resilient biasing element has a length that is at least coextensive with a length of one of the punches.

76. (New) The method of claim 71 wherein the resilient biasing element comprises a spring.

77. (New) The method of claim 71 wherein the resilient biasing element comprises a resilient tube that receives one of the punches.

78. (New) The method of claim 71 wherein the resilient biasing element comprises a polymeric resilient member.

79. (New) The method of claim 78 wherein the polymeric resilient member comprises rubber.

80. (New) The method of claim 71 wherein driving the punches comprises passing the punches along the punch stroke path to an intermediate depth of the fiber-cement panel without passing the punches completely through the panel and ejecting plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

81. (New) The method of claim 71 wherein driving the punches comprises passing the punches along the stroke path completely through the fiber-cement panel and ejecting the plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.